

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

The specification is amended by the present response to correct a minor typographical error and to appropriately place a heading. The changes made to the specification are not believed to raise any issues of new matter.

Claims 1-36 are pending in this application. Claims 1-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. patent 5,802,260 to Shimakawa et al. (herein "Shimakawa").

Addressing the above-noted rejection based on Shimakawa, that rejection is traversed by the present response.

Initially, applicants note the claims are amended by the present response to clarify features recited therein. Specifically, independent claim 1 now clarifies that the job transfer unit "itself automatically" transfers the at least one print job stored in the buffer provided in the source printing apparatus to the buffer of another printing apparatus. The other independent claims are similarly amended.

The claim amendments clarify features of the claimed invention. More particularly, one feature in the claimed invention is to have a printing system itself automatically transfer print jobs from a buffer of one source printing apparatus to a buffer of another printing apparatus so that printing can be completed as quickly as possible even when a number of print jobs are concentrated on one printer.¹ As discussed throughout the specification, the claimed printing system and method themselves automatically initiate the transfer of print jobs. That is, in the claimed invention no user input is needed for such a transfer of a print job. As a non-limiting example noted in the present specification at page 22, line 8 et seq., a print load distribution apparatus 80 includes a job transfer decision unit 114 that can specify a

¹ See for example the present specification at page 2, lines 1-3.

source printer that requires a job transfer and a destination printer to receive the transferred print job based on monitoring results of a job status monitor unit 111 and printer status monitor units. As evident from the noted disclosure in the present specification at page 22, line 8 et seq., the printing system and method itself automatically initiate such a transfer; that is, no user input is required for such a job transfer. In such ways, the amended claim features are believed to be fully supported by the original specification.

The features clarified in each of the claims are believed to clearly distinguish over the applied art to Shimakawa.

Shimakawa discloses a system in which a user can use an input device such as a keyboard 14 or mouse 15, to request a printing operation on a printer 105 for a desired printing job by inputting a print request command through the input device.²

The basis for the outstanding rejection cites Shimakawa at column 6, lines 3-15 to disclose the job transfer operation of the claimed invention. However, such teachings in Shimakawa do not correspond to the claimed features.

More particularly, according to Shimakawa, in the case in which a plurality of printing jobs are requested by a plurality of other users so that a printing job for a particular user is in the waiting queue with a considerable time expected, the request for the printing job may be transferred to another printer. However, in Shimakawa that transfer is initiated by the user inputting, through an input, a continued print command indicating the substitute printer.

That is, in Shimakawa the user must initiate the transfer of a print job from one printer to another. As noted in Shimakawa at column 6, line 15 et seq., the user must provide an input for a "continued print command" to confirm a print job prior to any transfer of that print job.

² Shimakawa at column 4, line 63 to column 5, line 2.

The claimed invention requires a different operation than as in Shimakawa. In the claimed invention the printing system or method automatically determines whether a print job stored in one printing apparatus should be transferred to another printing apparatus, and then automatically transfers the print job when appropriate.

Applicants also note the claimed invention provides a significant benefit over the device of Shimakawa in that in the claimed invention the user does not have to remain at the printing device to initiate transfer of a print job from one printer to another. The device of Shimakawa does not permit a user to leave the printing device, i.e., the client 111, after the print command is issued as in Shimakawa the user must initiate any transfer print operation.

In contrast to Shimakawa, in the claimed invention, once a print command is issued, the claimed printing system and method automatically complete the target print job, even if the print job is transferred to another printing apparatus, and even if the user walks away from the print device. Such an operation in the claimed invention provides a significant advantage over the usability of a print system as compared with the system of Shimakawa.

In view of these foregoing comments, the claims as currently written are believed to distinguish over the teachings in Shimakawa.

As no other issues are pending in this application, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and it is hereby respectfully requested that this case be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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